



**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER**

KENNETH HAHN HALL OF ADMINISTRATION  
500 WEST TEMPLE STREET, ROOM 525  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012-2766  
PHONE: (213) 974-8301 FAX: (213) 626-5427

J. TYLER McCAULEY  
AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

August 30, 2004

TO: Supervisor Don Knabe, Chairman  
Supervisor Gloria Molina  
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke  
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky  
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM: J. Tyler McCauley   
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **GROUP HOME PROGRAM MONITORING REPORT – OPTIMIST  
GROUP HOME, MAIN CAMPUS**

We have completed a review of Optimist Group Home (Group Home or Agency), Main Campus operated by Optimist Youth Homes and Family Services. The Group Home contracts with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the Probation Department (Probation).

Optimist Group Home is a 94-bed residential facility, which provides care for boys ages 11-17 years who exhibit behavioral, social, and emotional difficulties. At the time of the monitoring visit, Optimist Group Home was providing services for 55 Probation children. Optimist Group Home is located in the First District.

**Scope of Review**

The purpose of the review was to determine whether the Agency was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement. Additionally, the review covered basic child safety and licensing issues, and included an evaluation of the Agency's Program Statement, internal policies and procedures, child case records, facility inspections, and interviews with six children placed in the Group Home at the time of the review. Interviews with the residents were designed to obtain their perspectives on the program services provided by the Agency, and to ensure adherence to the Foster Youth Bill of Rights.

*"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"*

### **Summary of Findings**

Generally, the Agency was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement. However, the Agency needs to make repairs to its facility; obtain a waiver from Community Care Licensing to allow more than two residents to share a bedroom; discard milk after its expiration date; provide at least the required minimum base allowance to residents 14 years old and older; and provide residents with basic grooming and hygiene supplies.

Attached is a detailed report of the review findings.

### **Review of Report**

We discussed our report with the Agency's management. The Agency's management is required to provide a corrective action plan to the Children's Group Home Ombudsman within 15 business days from the receipt of this report. We thank the management and staff for their cooperation during our review.

If you have any questions, please contact me, or have your staff contact DeWitt Roberts at (626) 293-1101.

JTM:DR:CC:mn

c: David E. Janssen, Chief Administrative Officer  
David Sanders, Ph.D., Director, DCFS  
Richard Shumsky, Chief Probation Officer  
Sil Orlando, Executive Director, Optimist Homes  
Public Information Office  
Audit Committee

**Optimist Youth Homes and Family Services  
Optimist Group Home Main Campus  
6957 North Figueroa Street  
Los Angeles, Ca 90042  
Phone: (323) 341-7810  
License No.: 191801986  
Rate Classification Level: 12**

**I. Facility and Environment**

*(Facility Based - No Sample)*

**Method of assessment – Observation and resident interviews**

**Sample size for resident interviews: Six**

**Comments:**

The Optimist Group Home (Group Home or Agency) is a dormitory-style facility located in a residential community. The Group Home is clean, spacious, and comfortable. The Group Home is well maintained, nicely landscaped, and blends well with the other homes on the block. There were no observable safety hazards.

The interior of the Group Home is generally neat and clean. The décor provides a home-like atmosphere. The common rooms are nicely decorated and maintained. The resident bedrooms are spacious, comfortable, and personalized to each child's desire with posters, pictures, and knick-knacks. However, there are a few areas that need improvement.

The weight room needs new rubber flooring and the carpet in the "A" dormitory is old and dirty. In the "C" dormitory, there are four residents sharing a bedroom rather than the allowable two, and the waiver from Community Care Licensing for the additional two residents has expired.

The Group Home maintains age appropriate and accessible recreational equipment. There are also board games, televisions, and DVD players. There are books and resource materials, including computers with a variety of programs.

There is a sufficient supply of frozen food, meat, canned goods, bakery items, and fresh fruit. The food is accessible and of adequate quality. However, several cartons of milk in the kitchen refrigerator were six days past their expiration date.

**Recommendations**

**1. Optimist Youth Homes and Family Services management:**

- a. Repair or replace the rubber flooring in the weight room.**

- b. Clean the carpet in the “A” dormitory.
- c. Obtain a waiver from Community Care Licensing to allow more than two residents to share a bedroom.
- d. Discard expired milk.

## **II. Program Services**

**Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews**

**Sample size for resident interviews: Six**

**Comments:**

The residents meet the Agency’s population criteria as outlined in their Program Statement. Residents received a complete initial diagnostic assessment after being admitted into the Agency’s program.

The Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) are current, realistic, measurable, and time specific. There was appropriate documentation to support the placement workers’ participation in the development and update of the NSPs.

The quarterly reports for residents are current, comprehensive, and appropriately focus on the goals of the NSPs.

The residents are provided with psychological testing, emotional and developmental counseling as required by the Program Statement. Case files reflect adequate documentation to show evidence of residents receiving regular weekly individual and/or group therapy.

### **Recommendations**

**There are no recommendations for this section.**

## **III. Educational and Emancipation Services**

**Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews**

**Sample size for resident interviews: Six**

**Comments:**

Residents are attending school. Records contain current semester report cards and/or progress reports for the residents. Residents reported that they are provided with a sufficient amount of daily educational stimulation away from school and feel that the

Group Home is supportive of their academic progress.

The Agency's program includes the development of residents' daily living skills. The residents are involved in the planning and preparation phase of meals. Hygiene care is discussed as needed and employment preparation encouraged.

Residents are offered the opportunity to participate in emancipation and vocational programs as appropriate.

Residents have the opportunity to work and manage their own money.

### **Recommendations**

**There are no recommendations for this section.**

## **IV. Recreation and Activities**

**Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews**

**Sample size for resident interviews: Six**

### **Comments:**

The Agency provides its residents opportunities to participate in recreational activities. The residents expressed overall satisfaction with the recreational activities and stated that the recreation schedules are followed.

The Group Home utilizes local community organizations for recreational and program resources. The residents reported that they participate in planning some of the activities. The residents have free time and are able to participate in self-selected activities.

Transportation is provided to and from the activities.

### **Recommendations**

**There are no recommendations for this section.**

## **V. Psychotropic Medication**

**Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents for 30 case files**

**Comments:**

Residents have current court authorizations and/or parental consents for psychotropic medication. Documentation confirms that the children are routinely seen by the prescribing psychiatrist.

Medication distribution logs are properly maintained.

**Recommendations**

**There are no recommendations for this section.**

**VI. Personal Rights****Method of assessment – Resident interviews****Sample size for resident interviews: Six****Comments:**

Residents expressed satisfaction with the Agency and its staff. Residents participate in an initial orientation and the Group Home's policies and procedures are posted. Residents reported that they feel safe in the Group Home and that there is no interference with their daily living functions.

Residents reported satisfaction with the taste of the food and with their ability to participate in menu development. They reported that there is sufficient staff supervision and expressed satisfaction with the quality of their interactions with staff. Residents feel there is at least one staff member they can easily talk to and trust.

Residents reported that they are assigned chores to complete on a daily basis that are reasonable and not too demanding. Residents are able to have visitors and make and receive personal telephone calls. They are permitted to contact their probation officers, attorneys, and family members as needed. Residents are able to attend weekly religious services of their choice and they feel that the Agency is respectful of their cultural lifestyles. The Agency allows the residents to celebrate holidays.

Residents reported that the discipline policies are consistently enforced and that there are fair and appropriate consequences for inappropriate behavior.

Residents are aware of their right to refuse medication.

**Recommendation**

**There are no recommendations for this section.**

## **VII. Clothing and Allowance**

### **Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews**

**Sample size for resident interviews: Six**

#### **Comments:**

The Agency provides appropriate clothing, items of necessity, and allowances to the residents. The Group Home supplies its residents with the required \$50 monthly clothing allowance and the residents are given the opportunity to select their own clothes. Clothing provided to residents is of good quality and of sufficient quantity.

The Agency has not provided residents with the required minimum base allowance. For residents 14 years and older, Optimist Group Home has only provided residents with a base allowance of \$3.00 per week instead of the required \$3.50 per week for children within this age range. Residents are able to increase their allowance according to the Agency's behavioral system. Residents are permitted to spend their allowances as they choose.

The Agency generally provides residents with adequate personal care items and adequate storage. However, the agency does not provide certain hygiene and grooming items as required. Instead, residents have to use their personal funds to pay for items such as soap, hair gel, hair oil, baby powder, body lotion, and shaving cream.

Residents are provided with regular opportunities to maintain photo albums/life books.

### **Recommendations**

#### **2. Optimist Youth Homes and Family Services management:**

- a. Provide residents 14-years-and-older with at least the required minimum base allowance.**
- b. Provide residents with basic hygiene and grooming items in accordance with contract requirements.**